THE

FAST,

A

POEM,

TRANSLATED FROM THE

PROPHET ISAIAH.

By the Rev. JAMES MURRAY.

Wherefore have we faſted, and thou ſeeſt not. Iſaiah lviii. 3.

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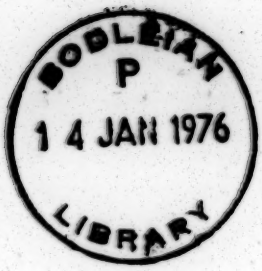

THE

FAST.

ISAIAH LVIII. 1 †.

IN lofty accents let thy voice be heard,
And ſhew the tribes the mandates of the Lord.
Through all the land proclaim what crimes abound,
Let every word loud like a trumpet ſound;
Spare neither age nor ſex, nor low nor high,
Let all the houſe of Jacob hear thy cry:
For from the loweſt cottage to the throne,
All ranks of men in paths of vice have gone.
They much profeſs, but yet their meaning's naught,
For not one word's an emblem of their thought.
In ſhew fictitious they draw nigh to me,
And act as if Jehovah did not ſee.
With pomp and ſplendor, void of ſoul and grace,
They pay devotion in my holy place.

A

† 1 Cry aloud, ſpare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and ſhew my people their tranſgreſſions, and the houſe of Jacob their ſins.

2 Yet they ſeek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteouſneſs, and forſook not the ordinances of their God: They aſk of me the ordinances of juſtice; they take delight in approaching to God.

3 Where-

A pleaſure counterfeit ſmiles on each brow,
And ſongs melodious from their lips do flow,
That ſuch as ſee them in this apiſh mode,
Would almoſt ſwear they did delight in God;
Yet all is fiction;—if you mark their courſe,
They ſtill proceed from evil deeds to worſe.
Their ſtate devotion's all an action feign'd,
For when they worſhip God, curs'd ſelf's their end.
Their ſlumb'ring prieſts like hirelings ſerve for pay,
And idly ſleep and ſaunter out the day.
Like drowſy idle ſhepherds, who at noon,
Stretch out their lazy limbs upon the down,
And ſleep ſecurely in the heat of day,
While all their flocks do wander far aſtray:
And when the rav'ning wolves the ſheep devour,
The ſhepherd lies ſupine, and ſleeps ſecure.
At laſt the ſluggard wakes, and as a proof
He loves the flock, he cries and ſcolds the wolf.
So thus the ſhepherds of the ſacred fold,
They cannot watch, but loudly can they ſcold.
Even God himſelf, (they are ſo void of grace),
They even dare to ſcold him to his face.

'How

3 Wherefore have we faſted, ſay they, and thou ſeeſt not? Wherefore have we afflicted our ſoul, and thou takeſt no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your faſt you find pleaſure, and exact all your labours.

4 Behold, ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs: Ye ſhall not faſt as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

5 Is

'How vain is it for us to faſt and pray,
'To waſte our labour and lament a day,
'To vex our ſouls for ſin, for though that we
'Do faſt and pray, Jehovah will not ſee;
'Or if he ſees us, pays us no regard,
'Nor thinks our labour worthy of reward.
'Our ſchemes are baffi'd, and our troops defeat,
'And all our wiſeſt projects are too late.
'The chiefs of Bozrah who obey'd our laws,
'Have now rebell'd, and Libnah's join'd their cauſe;
'Now both are rebels, and defy our hoſts,
'Defeat our armies, and invade our coaſts:
'Yet we have faſted many a weary day,
'But now we find it vain to faſt and pray.'

[THE WORDS OF THE ALMIGHTY.]

Can ſuch profane diſſemblers think that I
Will either hear their voice or mind their cry?

For

5 Is it ſuch a faſt that I have choſen; a day for a man to afflict his ſoul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſack-cloth and aſhes under him? Wilt thou call this a faſt, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

6 Is not this the faſt that I have choſen; to looſe the bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor, that are caſt out to thy houſe; when thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyſelf from thine own fleſh?

For when ye ſeem to faſt in outward ſhew,
You ſeek not things above, but things below;
Your ſouls are lofty, and your hearts are proud,
This all your actions do proclaim aloud;
For when ye faſt, and feign t' afflict your ſouls,
You ſwing in pleaſure, and ye ſwill in bowls;
And when ye come to bow before my throne,
Ye make your ſervants drudge like ſlaves at home.
You never faſt but when ye mean to ſmite,
And never pray unleſs for power to fight.
No more ye mean when ye your ſins confeſs,
Than to bribe heav'n for freedom to oppreſs.
Think ye that God, all gracious, ever will
Regard their litanies, who pray to kill?
To kill! and whom? your very fleſh and blood;
Should I regard you, how could I be good?
Ceaſe thus profanely to invoke my aid,
Or think I'll help to kill the ſouls I've made.
Ye tyrants, dread my thunder, fear your God,
And tremble at the lifting of my rod.
Is it a ſolemn faſt to pleaſe the Lord,
To bow the head, and next tranſgreſs my word?
Can ſack-cloth ſanctified, conceal your ſin,
Or hide from me your uglineſs within?
All ſpace I view, and all the orbs that roll,
Mine eyes behold, and penetrate the whole.
Your inmoſt thoughts, their ſecret ſprings I ſee,
Proceed from ſelfiſh vile hypocriſy.
To me's a faſt an acceptable day,
When none but hypocrites do faſt and pray;

When

When bended necks and ſtubborn hearts draw nigh,
To offer vain requeſts to the Moſt High?
Cry loud and long, yet for no other ends,
Except to kill their foes, enſlave their friends.—
Who never bend their knees before my bar,
Till ſin and guilt have plung'd them deep in war;
And then they think that I am ſo unjuſt,
To ſlaughter righteous men to feed their luſt.—
Their luſt of power; and when they ſteal my word,
Maintain they have dominion from the Lord.
Their legiſlature, though reverſe to mine,
They yet eclept a government divine.
Such is their power and impudence of face,
They'd ſwear that Satan's power proceeds from grace:
Even Saul, Manaſſeh, Ahab, all theſe three,
Pretended each they had their power from me.
Yet they from me had power no other way,
Than wand'ring ſlaves have power to go aſtray;
For power to live and move implies no more,
Than to preſerve what I have made before.
Abuſe of power depends upon men's will,
And all muſt blame themſelves when they do ill.
All juſt dominion hath its baſe in right,
And ſhines ſelf-evident like beams of light:
Man's luſts apart, all mankind muſt agree,
That only righteous power proceeds from me.
None need diſpute who has a right to rule,
The God of wiſdom ne'er appoints a fool.
When fools wear crowns, and tyrants ſceptres ſway,
Then ſubjects ſin not though they diſobey:

When

When legiſlative power's oppos'd to right,
Men are not rul'd by juſtice, but by might;
Force is no law, and violence no rule,
Who practice either muſt be knave or fool.
The ſcheme of government which I approve,
Is that which rules the heart of man by love.
What's Aaron's race or David's line to me,
When prieſts are proud, and kings love tyranny?
The poor man's intereſt, and his ſoul's as dear
In my eſteem, as thoſe of prince or peer.
Kings were appointed, legiſlatures made,
Mens int'reſts to preſerve, not to invade.
How great their power, how far their might ſhould go,
Are things quite plain, not difficult to ſhew.
The end of power is univerſal good,
A thing conſpicuous, eaſy underſtood.
Firſt do no ill, than all the good you can,
This is the end of government to man.

INFERENCES.

Kings often do, and princes oftimes pray,
For power to rule with univerſal ſway;
For royal proclamations ſeldom come
Abroad, unleſs to bring dominion home.
When kings proclaim a faſt, the blind may ſpy,
They have at leaſt a vineyard in their eye.
Ahab, than whom a baſer prince ne'er ſway'd
A ſcepter o'er a nation, whin'd and pray'd;
Proclaim'd a faſt at Jezebel's command,
And iſſu'd humiliation through the land:

But

But underneath this maſk dark vengeance lay,
And Naboth ſuffer'd when the court did pray;
The royal monarch gain'd his point at laſt,
And conſecrated murder by a faſt.
The venal miniſter's of Ahab's court,
Meant more by faſting than a ſimple ſport;
Like cunning politicians, who conceal
Their dark deſigns againſt the commonweal;
Who, leſt ſome prying folk ſhould chance to know,
Strike up ſome novel maſquerade or ſhow,
Some Cock-lane Ghoſt, or if theſe fail, at laſt
Amuſe the people with a *public* faſt.
State humiliations are but ſtate engines,
Intended chiefly to maſk o'er black crimes †.
Faſts ſeldom from the royal power proceed,
Unleſs the prince is ſadly pinch'd indeed.
Give monarch's troops, and but the treas'ry fill,
They'll leave the tribes of men to faſt who will.
A poor exchequer and the reg'ments thin,
To monarch's always is the greateſt ſin.
When loads of wealth are ſquander'd on their luſt,
And all the pond'rous ſums they hold in truſt,
Are ſcatter'd far abroad to gather power,
They call it treaſon to refuſe them more.
The ſubjects muſt not judge, although they pay,
How much the king and courtiers throw away.
Implicit faith to courts is reckon'd due,
And none have right to judge except a few;—

† I. Kings xxi. 1. to 13.

Whoſe int'reſt always blinds their judgments ſo,
They never err, be't ill or good they do.
Thus faith politic, like men's creed at Rome,
Is free to be explor'd by only—*ſome*.
The ignoble vulgar muſt remain content,
Though monarchs ſhould mortgage the continent.
Thus ſpeak the proud, but hear th' Eternal ſay
What men ſhould ponder when they faſt and pray.

[THE WORD OF THE LORD.]

'He who proclaims a faſt ought firſt to free
'His ſubjects from all yokes of tyranny:
'Looſe all unrighteous bands both more and leſs,
'And ceaſe e'en *helpleſs beggars* to oppreſs.
'Set priſons open, and the hungry feed,
'Bring water to the thirſty when they need;
'Give wholeſome covering to the naked poor,
'To all in want ſet open wide the door.
'When to your home your helpleſs friends repair,
'Let them have always ready welcome there.
'Nor ſuffer ſycophants for to deny
'Your preſence, when a needy friend ſtands by.
'Then ſhall thy glory like the morning ray,
'Burſt forth in ſplendor, and increaſe like day;
'Health like a bubbling fountain ſhall ſpring forth,
'And pleaſures flow from eaſt, ſouth, weſt, and north.
'The trump of Fame before thy face ſhall bear
'Thy high renown, and glory cloſe the rear;

'And

'And when thy oriſons ſhall aſcend on high,
'Thy God, propitious, ſhall attend thy cry;
'Grant all thy ſuits, and thy requeſts receive,
'And even ere you aſk ſhall anſwer give.
'Throw every yoke but legal bands away,
'Nor meanly rule with arbitrary ſway;
'For threat'ning proclamations never can
'Inſure obedience, or regard from man.
'How vain is it to think when kings command,
'That men ſhould run if they but wag their hand.'
Thus ſpoke Jehovah to the Jews of old,
And this the Prophets to the Fathers told †.

† Iſaiah lviii. 8, 9.

PART II.

E'ER ſince the time that monarchies began,
And monarchs claim'd dominion over man,
Princes who aim'd at arbitrary ſway,
And meant to make their villains all obey;
Have brib'd an hireling prieſthood firſt to blind
The human conſcience, and debaſe the mind:
For ev'ry tyrant, if he looſe his purſe,
Will find ſome Balaam ready with a curſe;—
Chearful to liſten to his Lord's command,
To ſcatter heaven's vengeance through the land;
Falſe prophets, Hannaniah like, to tell
When every thing is wrong, that all is well.—

Whoſe

Whoſe power of face, and vileſt impudence,
Exceed the utmoſt bounds of all pretence.
They think no ſhame to tell the groſſeſt lies,
And publiſh fictions for true prophecies.
E'en when an hoſt advances in array,
Will gravely ſwear they ſaw them run away:
Make ign'rant fools believe (for there are fools
At all times ready to be great men's tools)
That if they bow their heads or bend the knee,
In formal, feigned, vile hypocriſy,
With baſhful looks conceal the worſt intents,
That then they keep divine commandements.
When Zedekiah erſt o'er Judah reign'd,
And God's own people all his laws profan'd;
Falſe prophets then. as well as prophets ſince,
Told lies and flattery to that weak prince:
They augur'd all things as the courtiers will'd,
But never found their prophecies fulfil'd.
E'en thoſe who truſted to their prophecies,
In ſad experience found them all prove lies.
When Salem's ſtately towers and walls around,
In ruins lay quite level with the ground;
The temple ſack'd, and its foundation till'd,
Then were their godly prophecies fulfil'd.
Their haughty monarch, whoſe perverted mind,
To truth and all true diſcipline was blind;
Who to his flatt'ring ſycophants gave ear,
For his credulity he ſoon paid dear:
He ſaw his kingdom loſt, his city ta'en,
His deareſt offſpring in his preſence ſlain;

What

What now he ſaw was all foretold before,
He ſaw it true; alas, he ſaw no more!
The cruel Chaldean then put out his eyes,
And in his blindneſs prov'd the prophecies.
Helkiah's ſon, of Aaron's ſacred line,
Of Anathoth, by augury divine,
In ſtrongeſt emblems ſhew'd his diſmal fate;
At laſt he ſaw the truth; but ah! too late.
When Babel's warlike ſons approached near,
And fill'd the tribes of Judah all with fear;
The wiſe foreſaw the land's approaching doom,
And trembled for their miſeries to come.
But Azur's faithleſs ſon, an augur baſe,
Who yet at court paſs'd for a child of grace,
Brib'd by the miniſtry to publiſh lies,
Came forth with aſſes loads of prophecies.
Preach'd final conqueſt over every foe,
His lying paſquils o'er the country go,
Induſtrious ſpread by miniſterial tools,
To gull th' unwary and to flatter fools.
Full fifty thouſand in a month were ſold,
From Salem to Beerſheba I am told:
And when the faithleſs people would not buy,
The courtiers gave them out of courteſy.
So ſanguine they to blind the people's eyes,
They turned pedlars of falſe prophecies.
And Shephatiah, D——h I would ſay,
As Balaam preach'd and publiſh'd, he did pay;
The old falſe prophet in his chariot flew,
And every lie he catch'd he dreſs'd it new;

Curs'd

Curs'd as he went, and as his curſes flow'd,
Held up his hands, and turn'd his eyes to God.
His ſanctimonious phiz and ſly grimace
Paſs'd among partizans for ſigns of grace;
So reverend like he vamped all his lies,
That groſſeſt falſehoods paſs'd for prophecies.
Thus courtiers prais'd him, and the venal tribes,
Who judge a cauſe by int'reſt, truth by bribes;—
Who rights divine or human will not ſee,
Unleſs unlock'd by int'reſt's golden key.
Harden'd in ſin, and vainly puff'd with praiſe,
He ſhew'd ſome marks which were not ſigns of grace;
For which th' Almighty gave him in his ire,
Nor ſon nor daughter to ſucceed their ſire *.
While things turn'd worſe, and worſe, and ev'ry day
Brought ſtill new tidings of ſome freſh diſmay,
The king alarm'd, and rous'd through fear, at laſt,
Turn'd firſt devote, and then proclaim'd a faſt.
He call'd the prieſts and prophets to prepare
A ſcheme of faſting, and a form of prayer,
To try if heav'n would grant him power to kill,
All thoſe that were not ſubject to his will.
Court, prieſts, and prophets, when that ſov'reign's cry
Run at their call, and at their nod draw nigh;
For royal mandates have a powerful zeſt,
And like a mighty loadſtone draw a prieſt.
Even biſhops feel their ſympathetic force,
And all who have their feelings in their purſe.

From

* Jer. xxix. 32.

From Jearim to Beerſheba all obey'd,
Even judges faſted and attornies pray'd;
One would have thought all Judah were ſincere,
For nought was heard but mighty peals of prayer;
Like Ahab's prieſts they would not be ſaid nay,
Though God refus'd to hear, yet ſtill they pray.
Than Hananiah none ſhew'd more zeal,
In fervent faſting for the commonweal;
With labour'd ſuits he pray'd, and while he cry'd,
The very God of battles he defy'd.
Of Jewiſh valour vauntingly he ſpoke,
And with a ſymbol brake the Chaldean yoke*;
Made all the tribes believe their foes would run
Like bats and owls before th' approaching ſun.
He prov'd ſtill more, that on that fatal day,
When Nergal † conquer'd, that he ran away.
Him fools believ'd, and liv'd in hope to ſee
The Jews victorious and the Chaldeans flee:
So ſtrong their faith, they boaſt how ev'ry Jew
Had conquer'd ſquadrons, told they legions ſlew;
At their approach their foes ſtill run away,
And yet the conquering tribes ſtill loſt the day.
When heav'n's ang'ry frowns their hopes beguil'd,
Then Hananiah ſwore Jehovah ſmil'd;
Told how their foes were blaſted ſince that day,
The guilty Jews began to faſt and pray.
Yet ev'ry poſt brought tidings worſe and worſe,
Oft' times the foot were ſlain, ſometimes the horſe:

All

* Jer. xxviii. 10.

† Nergal, a Chaldean officer.

All this was prov'd a victory complete,
And thoſe who vanquiſhed were aye defeat.
Such power has faſting in the hands of kings,
It changes nature, and the cauſe of things.
Even ſins are ſanctified when princes pray,
And light turns darkneſs, darkneſs ſhines like day.
All this a venal prieſthood will declare,
And conſecrate plain murder lawful war.
Even ſo it was in Ahab's pious reign,
Baal's prophets pray'd till Naboth he was ſlain.
Whate'er the prince deſir'd, with one accord,
The prieſts inſur'd him always from the Lord.
Four hundred prophets in a luſty ring,
As they obſequiouſly ſtood round the king,
With roſy gills in cringing accents bleſs,
And ſwore that Ramoth Gilead ſure was his.
But ſhall I proſper, the vain prince reply'd,
They all ſaid proſper; but the prophets ly'd.
With hieroglyphic horns (vain ſymbols thoſe)
To ſhew how wicked men would puſh their foes,
Theſe lying prophets, with a ſolemn farce,
Made fooliſh Ahab think himſelf was Mars;
But when the awful day of battle came,
He found their words and deeds were not the ſame.
'Tis vain to faſt and pray while men remain
Reſolv'd to hold, and all their ſins retain.
They can't be humble who reſolve to ſin,
Nor are they pure who lodge vile thoughts within.
'Tis no hard matter for to faſt till four,
Then feaſt on turtle when the faſt is o'er.

Where

Where envy rules, or proud ambition reigns,
Religion's ſelf is fetter'd faſt in chains.
Howe'er abſtemious envious mortals are,
With God and man they wage eternal war.
Whole chapels crowded full of envious men,
Are but an image of that dreary den,
Envy's dark cave, which erſt the virgin found
In a dark vale, and deep below the ground.
Where Envy, ſeated in her dark abode,
Defil'd with ropy gore and clots of blood;
Shut from the wind and from the wholeſome ſkies,
In a deep vale the dreary dungeon lies;
Diſmal and cold, where not a ray of light
Invades the winter, or diſturbs the night.
A poiſ'nous morſel in her teeth ſhe chew'd,
And gorg'd the fleſh of vipers for her food.
Minerva, loathing, turn'd away her eye,
The hideous monſter, riſing heavily,
Came ſtalking forward, with a ſullen pace,
And left her mangled offals on the place.
Soon as ſhe ſaw the goddeſs gay and bright,
She fetch'd a groan at ſuch a chearful ſight.
Livid and meagre were her looks, her eye
In foul diſtorted glances turn'd awry;
A hord of gall her inward parts poſſeſs'd,
And ſpread a greenneſs o'er her cancer'd breaſt;
Her teeth were brown with ruſt, and from her tongue
In dangling drops the ſtringy poiſon hung.
She never ſmiles but when the wretched weep,
Nor lulls her malice with a moment's ſleep;

Reſtleſs in ſpite, while watchful to deſtroy,
She pines and ſickens at another's joy;
Foe to herſelf, diſtreſſing and diſtreſs'd,
She bears her own tormentor in her breaſt.
She takes her ſtaff hung round with wreaths of thorn,
And ſails along, in howling tempeſts born,
O'er fields and flowery meadows; where ſhe ſteers
Her baneful courſe, a mighty blaſt appears,
Mildews and blights; the meadows are defac'd,
The fields and flow'rs and the whole year laid waſte.
On mortals next, and peopled towns ſhe falls,
And breathes a burning plague among their walls.
Though men may faſt, and with much fervour pray,
Malice and envy ſoon will guilt betray.
He who commits a crime will quickly find
The preſſing guilt lie heavy on his mind,
Though bribes or favour ſhould aſſert his cauſe,
Pronounce him guiltleſs, and elude the laws.
None quits himſelf; his own impartial thought
Will damn, and conſcience will record the fault.
Each as his hands in guilt have been embru'd,
By helliſh horror ever is purſu'd,
A virtuous heart, and unſtain'd innocence
Is man's beſt ſecond guard, and ſure defence.
But hear with patience a fam'd heathen's word,
It may do good even to a faſting lord,
Who faſts for power, and when he faſts will pray
For might to make reluctant lands obey;
And flimſy patriots, if they will, may hear
Some wholeſome leſſons for a patriot's ear.

That

That man's a Siſyphus whom noiſe and ſtrife
Seduce from all the ſoft retreats of life;
To vex the government, diſturb the laws,
Drunk with the fumes of popular applauſe,
He courts the giddy crowd to make him great,
And ſweats and toils to mount the ſov'reign ſeat.
For ſtill to aim at power and ſtill to fail,
Ever to ſtrive and never to prevail;
What is it? but, in reaſon's true account
To heave the ſtone againſt the riſing mount:
Which urg'd with labour, and forc'd up with pain,
Recoils, and rolls impetuous down the plain.
But mark him down a ſlave, who, humbly proud,
With preſents begs preferment from the crowd;
That early ſuppliant, who ſalutes the tribes,
And ſets the mob to ſcramble for his bribes.
That ſome old dottard, ſitting in the ſun,
On holidays may tell what fates were done.
But ye proud chiefs, that thirſt for ſov'reign ſway,
Hear what an ancient Heathen bard doth ſay.
'Some aſk for envy'd pow'r, which public hate
'Purſues and hurries headlong to their fate;
'Down go their titles, and their ſtatues crown'd
'Are by baſe hands in the next river drown'd;
'The guiltleſs horſes, and the chariot wheel,
'The ſame effects of vulgar fury feel.
'The ſmith prepares his hammer for the ſtroke,
'While belching bellows hiſſing fire provoke.

Sejanus,

'Sejanus *, almoſt firſt of Roman names,
'The great Sejanus crackles in the flames.
'Form'd in the forge, the pliant braſs is laid
'On anvils, and of head and limbs are made
'Pans, cans, and piſs-pots, and ſuch kitchen ſtuff;
'Nor did their mean revenge think this enough:
'They drag the image through the ſtreets, and loud
'Sound welcome to the gazing gath'ring crowd.
"Adorn your doors with laurels, and a bull
"Milk white and large, lead to the capitol;
"Sejanus with a rope is dragg'd along,
"The ſport and laughter of the giddy throng.'
'Good Lord, they cry, what blackmoor lips he has,
'How foul a ſmock, and what a hanging face!
'By Heav'n, I never could endure his ſight;
'But ſay, How came his monſtrous crimes to light?
'What is the charge, and who the evidence?
'There muſt be ſtriking proofs of his offence.
'Nothing at all of this; but Cæſar ſent
'A threat'ning letter to the Parliament:
'Nay, Sirs, if Cæſar writ, I aſk no more;
'He's guilty—and the queſtion's out of door.'
Now, with Sejanus wouldſt thou change thy fate,
To be like him, firſt miniſter of ſtate?
To have thy levees crowded with reſort
Of a depending, gaping, ſervile court;

Diſpoſe

* Prime miniſter of Tiberius Cæſar: He had many triumphal chariots and ſtatues erected to him; but falling into diſgrace, they were all broken down, and the Senate and people inſulted over him as meanly as they had formerly flattered him.

Diſpoſe all honours of the ſword and gown,
Raiſe with a nod, and ruin with a frown;
To hold thy prince in pupilage and ſway
The monarch whom the conquer'd world obey:
Yes, I believe thou would'ſt be great as he;
For every man's a fool to that degree.
All wiſh the dire prerogative to kill,
Even they would have the power that want the will.
But would'ſt thou have thy wiſhes underſtood,
To take the bad together with the good?
Would'ſt thou not rather chooſe the ſmall renown,
To be the mayor of ſome poor paltry town?
Bigly to look and barbarouſly to ſpeak,
To pound falſe weights, and ſcanty meaſures break;
Than be Sejanus, ſo advanc'd in place,
Then tumbled headlong to ſuch mean diſgrace.
Great Hannibal within the balance lay
And tell how many pounds his aſhes weigh;
Him Afric was not able to contain,
Whoſe length runs level with the Atlantic main,
And weakens fruitful Nilus to convey
His ſun-beat waters by ſo long a way.
Spain firſt he won, the Pyrenæans paſt,
And frozen Alps, the mounds that nature caſt;
And with corroding juices, as he went,
A paſſage through the living rocks he rent.
Though Italy was conquer'd and o'er-run,
Uneaſy ſtill, he cry'd, there's nothing done;
Till level with the ground their gates are laid,
And punic flags on Roman towers diſplay'd.

But

But what's his end, O charming glory! ſay
What rare fifth act to crown this huffing play?
In one deciding battle overcome,
He flies, is baniſh'd from his native home.
Theſe heathen hints, in an auſpicious hour,
May warning give to ſuch as pray for power.
To ſee the wan-complexion'd, gambling crew,
In church ſit cloiſter'd, faſting in a pew,
Yawning and panting till the hour's are paſt,
And longing more to break than keep their faſt,
To hear the long rob'd gentry ſqueaking ſay,
Ah guilty! *Miſerere Domine,*
Is ſuch a farce, would almoſt ſpoil the grace,
And pinch the ſkill of Ariſtophanes,
To give their characters a ſtriking hue,
As they ſit feign'dly faſting in the pew.
By play men's tempers are unguarded made,
And when the head's intent the heart's betray'd;
Then baſe deſires of gain, then rage appears,
Next blows and brawls ariſe, and anxious fears;
Then clamour and revellings reach the ſky,
While loſing gameſters heaven and earth defy;
Then horrid oaths are utter'd every caſt,
They grieve, and curſe, and ſwear, nay, weep at laſt,
And in a pet will even feign to faſt.
When lawyers faſt, and when that gamblers pray,
Or when that biſhops caſt the tythes away,
When haughty churchmen are not fond of power,
Or when the ſtrong do not the weak devour;

Then

Then ſhall diſſemblers find it on record,
That when they faſt for ſtrife, they pleaſe the Lord.
But why do *pious* nations, in diſtreſs,
Flee to the Lord, and all their ſins confeſs?
Sins, which they mean not ever to give o'er,
While ſin brings gain, and vice increaſes power.
Can ſuch believe the great Almighty's blind,
And does not ſee the errors of the mind?
Or that hypocriſy and vile grimace,
Is a fit off'ring to obtain his grace?
While ſecret vice lies lurking in the mind,
And guilty culprits to their faults are blind:
Though they may bow, and cringe, and faſt a day,
In God's pure eye they neither faſt nor pray.
A pamper'd prelate, finely deck'd in lawn,
To faſt and pray, (by ſix fine horſes drawn
In a gilt coach), and to confeſs the crimes
Of lords and ſcavengers, in theſe bad times,
Is ſo polite a mark of penitence,
That drunken peers can ſcarcely take offence.
But why not join in praiſe as well as faſt,
And thank the Lord for many favours paſt?
For ſmiling ſprings dreſs'd in a verdant green,
And gladſome ſummers which our eyes have ſeen;
With richeſt autumns in effulgence gay,
All nodding with a *cornu copiæ*.
For twenty ſeaſons paſt, and ſome few more,
The laſt was better than the year before;
And now the preſent ſtill excels the paſt,
Yet peeviſh Britons will not praiſe but faſt.

Like

Like children, who, for ſome conceiv'd affront,
Will faſt in ſpite, if bid them eat they wont;
Take penance on themſelves, 'cauſe Heav'n won't give
What their own pride unjuſtly would receive.
Who are not grateful for all favours paſt,
But mock Jehovah when they feign to faſt.

FINIS.